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Writing for change

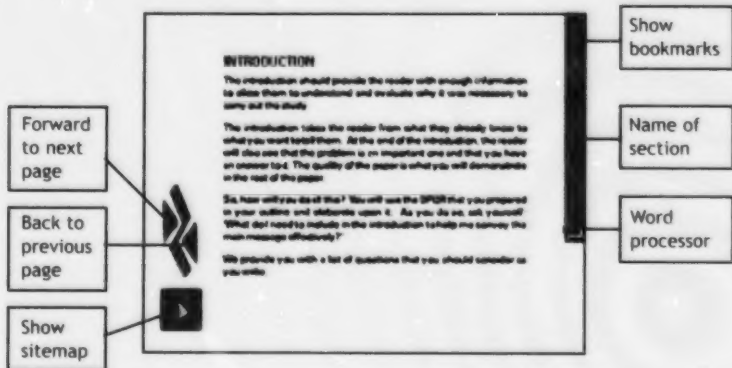
An interactive guide to
EFFECTIVE WRITING'
WRITING FOR SCIENCE
WRITING FOR ADVOCACY
CDROM and Users' guide

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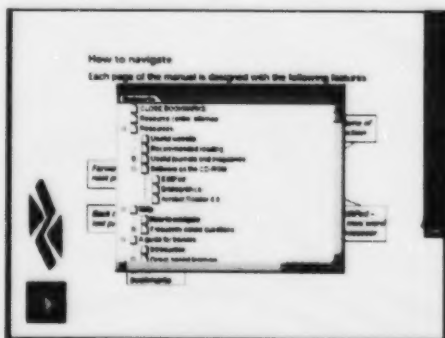
International Development Research Centre

HOW TO NAVIGATE

Each page of the manual is designed with the following features:



Clicking on the bookmark button will open a new window showing section headings and sub-headings. Click to move to the section you are interested in. A '+' sign indicates there are sub-headings. Click the bookmark button again to close the bookmark window.





Writing for change

An interactive guide to

EFFECTIVE WRITING

WRITING FOR SCIENCE

WRITING FOR ADVOCACY

CDROM and Users' guide

Alan Barker and Firoze Manji

Illustrations and graphics
by Judith Charlton

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W riting for change

Foreword	4
Welcome to Writing for change	5
Introduction	6
Overview	7
Running the CDROM	11
Using Writing for change	12
For self-managed learning	13
For group-based learning	16
As a reference tool	17
Training workshops	18
About IDRC	26
About <i>fabamu</i>	28

FOREWORD

Research for development is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it is a way of gathering information and knowledge for action.

The insights generated through research for development may not realise their potential to inform, guide or spur action because they are not communicated in a way that is meaningful to target audiences. The scientific community requires information and knowledge communicated in one way. Policymakers, farmers and the general public require that same information and knowledge to be communicated in other ways. Scientists must feel confident in the evidence reported and must be encouraged to formulate new research questions. Policymakers must be convinced of the social relevance of the results and must be guided toward areas where change is needed. Farmers must be inspired to act on the ideas outlined and must be well enough informed to do so independently.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada) helps developing countries use science and knowledge to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic and environmental problems they face. We supported Writing for change so that our partners would have a tool to build their capacity to communicate research results in ways that promote action based on evidence and social relevance. The guide focuses on effective writing, important both for communicating science and for advocacy work.

Parallel with the production of Writing for change, IDRC sponsored three workshops on effective writing involving scientists, policy advocates and community-based development professionals in Chile, Kenya and South Asia. These workshops provided feedback for the production of Writing for change and strengthened the capacity of national institutions to provide ongoing training and support for effective writing. We are confident that Writing for change responds to a felt need for guidance on effective writing that can be used for self-managed or group learning and for running a training workshop. The combination of guidance on core writing skills, writing for science and writing for advocacy makes this product unique.

Daniel Buckles
International Development Research Centre
Ottawa, Canada

WELCOME TO Writing for change

Writing for change is an interactive CDROM and Users' guide that will help you produce effective documents at work.

We have designed it primarily for people working in the not-for-profit sector. If you are a:

- researcher
- scientist
- project manager
- team member
- campaigner
- fundraiser
- social activist
- writer

then you will find Writing for change helpful.

Whatever your role, you need to produce writing that makes a difference. Writing for change contains a section devoted to the core skills that you need to produce **reports, memos, e-mails or letters** – all the **day-to-day documents** that you need to write at work.

In addition, you may need to create specialised documents such as:

- **scientific papers** for publication in scientific journals;
- documents to help you campaign or persuade – **articles, leaflets, newsletters, pamphlets, press releases** or even **posters**.

Writing for change is unique as a training resource because it contains major sections devoted not only to the core skills of writing, but also to these two crucial areas of specialised writing. It also provides advice on professional and ethical standards in writing.

This Users' guide:

- gives you an overview of what we cover in Writing for change;
- explains how to run and use Writing for change;
- offers you help on how to use it for self-managed or group learning;
- provides a framework for running a workshop based on or using Writing for change.



INTRODUCTION

Do you want your writing to make a difference? Do you want it to influence others, to persuade people and bring about real, positive change? If you do, Writing for change will be invaluable.

People working in research and advocacy organisations need to do lots of writing: project documents, articles for magazines, papers for publication in scientific journals, proposals, newsletters – the list can seem endless.

Many able and committed people find writing time-consuming, boring – and difficult. Rather than sitting at a desk, we would prefer to be doing the real work: setting up the next experiment, conducting field research, lobbying politicians or engaging with the community. Yet the world will only know about the quality and significance of our work through the documents that explain or promote it. Our success depends on our ability to communicate our ideas to others – often on paper.

The skills of literacy and written composition that we have learnt at school, college or university are not always adequate to the task. Scientific journals make complex demands; writing to campaign or persuade socially or politically is very different from writing an essay in a classroom.

Most of us find writing hard work. Thinking and speaking come to us naturally – but writing well is something we have to learn. If you:

- think of writing as a chore;
- spend hours looking at a blank sheet of paper, wondering how to start;
- find it hard to put your ideas into words;

then Writing for change can help.



OVERVIEW

The Writing for change CDROM contains three sections.

Effective writing: core skills helps you to develop the skills you need to write clearly and purposefully. Here you will find the skills you need to organise your ideas and express them well.

These skills are useful whatever you are writing. They will help you produce most work-related documents. They are the core skills of effective writing.

For this reason, we strongly suggest that you complete this section before moving on to any others. All the other parts of Writing for change build on the skills you will learn here. Whether you are managing your own learning or helping others to learn, this section should be your first port of call.

Writing for science shows you how to produce writing for publication in specialist journals. Here, you will learn how to build on the core skills of effective writing and add further skills that apply to this very specialised type of paper. Working through this section will give you what you need to know to give you a better chance of getting published. We discuss the ethics of authorship. We also show you all you need to know about responding to editors and correcting proofs before publication.

Writing for advocacy contains a wealth of advice on how to win hearts and minds and how to adapt your core writing skills to lobbying or campaigning documents. We cover articles, leaflets, newsletters, pamphlets, press releases and posters.

We have also included a resource centre, where you can find our suggestions for further reading, information about software on Writing for change and links to useful websites and resources. We also include a manual for trainers.

Throughout Writing for change, we have included practical examples to illustrate key points – all of them taken from real documents produced in organisations like yours. We also encourage you to use Writing for change as you create real documents, taking you step by step through each stage. We have included a small word processor (EditPad) that you can use to make notes as you go. Alternatively, you can use your usual word processing software.

Effective writing: core skills

Effective writing gets results. In this section, you'll discover how to create documents that put across a clear message to achieve the action you want.

Effective writing: core skills is in four parts. They follow the four key stages in creating an effective working document.

- **Creating a message.** Your document will be more effective if it delivers a clear message. Working out what that message is will be the first – and most important – stage in producing the document. In this part, you'll learn how to define what you want to achieve, analyse your audience and work out what you need to tell them.
- **Organising your ideas.** Effective writing turns accurate information into persuasive ideas. Here you can explore how to structure your document, how to assemble the evidence that you need and how to put it all together into a plan or outline.
- **Writing the first draft.** Here you can find out how to transform your plan into a draft document: how to write clearly, how to use summaries and introductions, how to include navigation aids such as headings and numbering systems and how to make the document look professional.
- **Effective editing.** Finally, you will learn how to make your writing clearer and more reader-friendly: how to create paragraphs that display the shape of your ideas, how to structure sentences well and how to choose your words.

Writing for science

Writing for science is different from other kinds of writing. You certainly need to be able to use everything you learnt in **Effective writing: core skills**, but writing for a scientific or academic journal demands extra, specialised skills.

Many journals reject papers because they are poorly written. As well as writing clearly, you must be able to follow the conventions of presenting scientific information as well as keeping to the journal's established traditions of style and format. This section will help you create papers that have a good chance of being accepted for publication.

Writing for science contains five parts.

- **Developing the concept on paper.** Here you can define why you want to publish, your chosen topic and the most important message you want to convey in your paper. We help you analyse the specialised audience that you will be writing for and choose the best journal to submit to.
- **Preparing an outline.** This will help you clarify your thinking and establish the paper's framework.
- **Writing the first draft.** We provide a series of questions to help you check that you have covered the main points that the referees are likely to be concerned about.
- **Topping and tailing.** We guide you through the process of embellishing and completing your paper with all the necessary apparatus: title, abstract, references, headings, acknowledgements and so on. You will also find guidance on the ethics of authorship.
- **Publishing the paper.** We provide a checklist to help you ensure that you have included everything necessary. We discuss how to edit the paper in response to comments from referees and editors and show you how to correct proofs. Finally, we suggest ways in which you can promote your paper on publication.

Writing for advocacy

Advocacy is persuading people to take action. It involves supporting or challenging ideas. If you have to convince or recommend, you are advocating.

This section of Writing for change concentrates on writing for non-specialist audiences. It looks at the principles of effective advocacy and explores the different media you might use in your campaigning.

Writing for advocacy contains two main parts.

- **Understanding advocacy** explains the key issues you must confront when setting out to campaign or persuade.
- **Who are you writing for?** Different kinds of audiences will need persuading in different ways and with different ideas.

- **What are you writing for whom?** Different media will also be appropriate for these different audiences, depending on their social or political position, their levels of literacy and their broader values.
- **Constructing a message** for your audience means concentrating on the action you want them to take and how you can appeal to their hearts and minds.
- **Appealing to hearts and minds** is itself an important exercise. Different audiences have different values and priorities. Successfully persuading your audience means understanding the key persuasive factors that will influence them. Your argument must satisfy their needs and yet remain true to your own values and integrity.
- Finally, we explore the **paradigms** that shape our thinking, and how to identify the paradigms in the minds (and hearts.) of your target audience.
- **Media for advocacy** contains ideas about creating a range of advocacy documents:

Articles
Pamphlets

Leaflets
Posters

Newsletters
Press releases

We offer you a step-by-step approach to producing each of these different media, involving:

- defining your objective and choice of medium;
- planning the document;
- producing the document;
- publishing or distributing the document.

We also give you examples of best practice in each.



RUNNING THE CDROM

Writing for change is designed to run directly from the CDROM. You don't need to install anything on your computer's hard disk.

What you will need

To run the program on the CDROM, Macintosh users need System 7.5 or above. Windows® users need Windows® 95, Windows® 98, or Windows® NT.

1. Insert the Writing for change CDROM in the CDROM drive and close the drive-bay.

The program should run automatically provided that the auto-run setting is on. Otherwise, browse to the CDROM drive and double click on the *fahamu* icon.

Adobe™ Acrobat Reader 4.0 will open. You may be asked to accept the licence agreement and to select the language: please choose English. Shortly afterwards, the opening screen of Writing for change will be displayed on your screen.

2. Your cursor will appear as a pointing hand  in the centre of the screen.

You can click anywhere you like to proceed to the next screen.

3. For guidance on how to navigate from now on, see the inside front cover of this Users' guide.

If you want to take notes, you can use the accompanying word processor by clicking on the 'notebook' icon. This will run EditPad (Windows®) or 'Stickies' (Macintosh). If you wish to use your usual word processor, press Ctrl-L (Windows®) or Cmd-L (Macintosh) to place Writing for change in a separate window. Pressing Ctrl-L/Cmd-L will switch Writing for change back to full-screen view.



USING Writing for change

You can use Writing for change in four main ways:

- a resource for self-managed learning;
- a resource for group-based learning;
- a reference tool to help you whenever you need it;
- a framework for running a training workshop or programme.

In the next sections, we'll give you some ideas for how to make the best use of Writing for change in each of these ways.

Writing for change for self-managed learning

Self-managed learning simply means that you have taken full responsibility for your own learning. You might use Writing for change entirely on your own; you might use it as part of a wider process of learning involving other resources – books, courses, tapes or other electronic resources on disk or on line.

Managing your learning yourself means that you must:

- identify your own learning needs;
- set your own objectives;
- work out a programme of study;
- look for opportunities to practice what you have learnt;
- discipline yourself to make time for the work;
- evaluate your progress against your targets.

What are your learning needs?

Begin by thinking about what you need to learn. This is different from what you may *want* to learn. Obviously, we all learn much more energetically and successfully if we are keen on what we are learning; but you must also recognise the demands that your work makes on you and how learning can most effectively improve your performance. This is particularly important if your organisation is sponsoring you or offering you time to learn. Your manager will need to know that what you are learning will make a difference in your work.

Note down your needs and try to gather them together into a small number of key areas: maybe no more than six or seven. Put those needs into a logical order. What do you need to learn first? If you have one overall need – if, for example, there is one particular type of writing that you need to develop – place that at the end of your sequence and check that all the other steps lead logically towards it.

Setting your learning objectives

Now translate these needs into objectives. What do you want to achieve from your learning? Make a set of clear statements about the skills and knowledge that you want to develop.

You might set objectives in two ways.

- Try stating each objective as a phrase beginning with the words 'How to'.
- Write a sentence beginning: 'By the end of this learning programme, I will be able to...'. Now list all your objectives under this unfinished sentence.

Make sure that your list of objectives isn't too long. Once again, limit yourself to six or seven at most.

Align your objectives with the structure of Writing for change. We strongly recommend that you address objectives covered by **Effective writing: core skills** before you address any others. These core skills are vital in all the other areas that we explore. You need to be able to practise them generally before you apply them to particular kinds of writing.

Working out a programme of study

Think about how long this programme of study will take. Set a final deadline for the end of the programme.

Your plan must be realistic. If you set targets that are too ambitious, your programme will flounder. Remember that you will have to fit this study into your other work. Where will the time come from? Try not to make your deadline too far into the future. If it looks as if your programme is extending to beyond a year, think about breaking your objectives down and aiming simply for the first few targets.

As with any other learning activity, 'little and often' is better than aiming for one or two huge objectives over a long time. As you achieve each small step, you gain the satisfaction of knowing that you are moving towards your goal. The alternative is probably a long period of 'putting it off' followed by a mad scramble to meet your deadline.

Write your study programme out on a chart or timetable.

Looking for useful opportunities

You may be able to include real pieces of work in your study programme. If you have a paper to write with a deadline three months away, try to include that document in your programme as a practical example of your learning.

Keeping to your plan

Self-managed learning demands real self-discipline. Think about other activities where you have put in regular work to achieve excellence: music, sports, academic study – and work activities as well, like completing a project or running a campaign. All the skills you brought to bear in those areas will be useful here.

Making the plan on a sheet of paper is a valuable way of keeping your mind focussed on the work. Put it on the wall and use coloured pens or stickers to mark your progress. You might even award yourself prizes at the end of each stage.

If you can share your plans and work with colleagues, you will find that their support and encouragement will help you achieve your goals. This can extend to the mutual support that characterises group-based learning – more on this shortly.

Evaluating your progress

Every plan is subject to change. Reviewing your progress in the light of the unexpected will help you to stay on track – or to change track if necessary and still achieve something.

All effective learning involves reviewing what you've done and drawing conclusions from it. Unfortunately, many of us ignore these crucial activities and concentrate instead on pushing ahead to achieve the next part of the programme. Unless you have reviewed your progress – what worked and what didn't; what you understood and what you found difficult – you will be hard put to alter your plan wisely. Your progress may become patchy and slow; you may find yourself becoming disheartened and give up altogether.

A learning log can help you with this reviewing process. Rather like a lab book in scientific research, a learning log is an informal record of what you've done and what you've learnt; what you found useful or significant; and what you intend to put into practice. Here are some other hints on making best use of the log.

- Write it up regularly, adding to it as soon as a learning activity is complete.
- Keep the entries short and succinct.
- Adopt your own style.
- Keep it neat and tidy, but don't aim for great elegance.
- Check your log at intervals to review your progress and alter your plan.

You may want to:

- use the word processor supplied with Writing for change – or your usual word processor – to prepare your log;
- print out and display the sitemap – ticking off those sections you have completed.

What could happen to alter your plan while you are studying?

- You find a particular activity enjoyable and repeat it or spend more time exploring it.
- You become stuck with an activity that is boring or unsuccessful.
- A new project comes up at work that demands more of your time.
- An activity suggests a new area of study that you want to include in your plan.
- A new opportunity arises to apply what you are learning or learn something new.

If any of these happen to you, your response should be simple and positive. Change your plan. Be aware that your plan is yours, that you have control over it and that it's flexible. Review your progress against the overall objective of your study. Are you still on track? Will the change that you propose still help you to achieve your broader goal? How important is the change in relation to your original plan? If the worst were to come to the worst, which would you sacrifice?

Let's hope it doesn't come to a hard choice. All plans have to change to meet the unforeseen. The important thing is to keep your objectives in mind and congratulate yourself on the progress you have made so far. All learning is valuable; sometimes the most valuable lessons are the ones we didn't plan for.

Writing for change for group-based learning

Group-based learning can help individuals to manage their own learning more effectively. Group members can provide the all-important support that we all need to keep to our learning plans; and conversations in the group are useful for giving feedback, exploring ideas and clarifying points that individuals may find hard to understand. Group-based learning can provide increased levels of:

- energy;
- interest;
- feedback.

All the elements of self-managed learning apply equally to group-based learning:

- identifying learning needs;
- setting learning objectives;
- working out a programme of study;
- looking for opportunities to practise what the group has learnt;
- exerting discipline to maintain the programme;
- evaluating progress against targets.

Clearly, organising the learning as a group will help you to manage some of these elements more easily. Equally, some may become more complicated when a group of people is involved.

For example, objectives may need to be broader to encompass the needs of a number of people. You will need to work out your programme of study more carefully, so that it allows for the varied work that group members do. It may become more complicated to evaluate progress: individuals will inevitably learn at different rates. And simply getting together to discuss how the group is progressing might be difficult.

Managing learning in the group

You can manage learning in the group in a number of ways. The important thing is that you decide, *as a group*, how you will run your programme.

- You could run a group session, perhaps on the core skills of writing, and then divide people's work into individual projects.
- You could establish individual learning plans and use the group as a forum to provide discussion and support.

- You could set up a 'buddy' system, in which individuals support and encourage each other through their learning.
- You could write a 'learning manifesto' that defines your objectives as a learning group, your methods and the values that you will practise in your programme.

You may find that you are able to manage your learning as a self-managed team. It's more likely that one of you will need to become the leader, facilitator or co-ordinator – the person responsible for making sure that the group keeps to its programme, meets when it promises to and behaves as it should.

You may wish to:

- prepare overheads based on the materials in Writing for change;
- print out pages that have examples for you to work on;
- display Writing for change on a computer or through a projector; or
- place the contents of Writing for change on to a network.

Writing for change as a reference tool

Writing for change can be more than a learning tool, of course. You can also use it as a reference tool to help you produce a wide range of documents.

We envisage that you will be able to make best use of Writing for change in this way after having used it for structured learning or training. You can use **Effective writing: core skills** to remind you of the key stages of producing a work document. **Writing for science** is a step-by-step electronic coach that will see you from the first to last stages of writing and submitting a scientific paper for publication. And **Writing for advocacy** contains lots of ideas to dip into whenever you need to produce one or more of the campaigning media we cover.

You can use the sitemaps on Writing for change to help you find your way around. If you are using the CDROM as a reference tool, the best way is to press F5 to display the detailed bookmarks window: it will save you lots of time in finding the material you need.

In addition, Writing for change includes a useful resource centre. Here you will find links to books, websites and organisations that will be of interest in your work. In particular, you will find a link to *fishamu*'s own website, which we are continually updating with new information, links and suggestions for further study.



TRAINING WORKSHOPS

If you are planning to train others in effective writing, then Writing for change will be an invaluable resource. You can use it as:

- the basis of a training programme;
- a framework for individual workshops;
- a resource to support learning after the training.

Writing for change can help you to provide high-quality training without the need of expensive training consultants from outside your organisation. To make the best use of it, however, you do need to follow some important guidelines.

- Plan the training well.
- Run the workshop competently.
- Be sure to follow up after the training to ensure that it has 'stuck'.

Planning the training

Any training workshop or programme needs to be carefully planned. Training is usually a very brief intervention in people's lives and it can all too easily fail to make a deep impression. You must make sure that you are well prepared, so that you use the limited amount of time available in the best possible way.

Get to know Writing for change well before you attempt to train anybody. Practise yourself and become competent with the techniques that we cover. The more you know, the more you will be able to help others.

All training needs to be planned with a few key questions in mind.

- **Who will you train?** A good mix of people usually makes for a good training session. Aim to mix people according to job types, managerial range and objectives. Clearly, too much diversity can result in a diffuse workshop that addresses nobody's needs well. In particular, take care not to include in your group too wide a range of expertise, experience or specialised writing needs. It can be useful to include research scientists along with community activists, but not if you intend to concentrate for a long time on one specific kind of document.

Writing is a skill that is best trained in small groups, so that you can give as much attention as possible to individuals. You may be forced to pack a training room with a large group; but, if you can, aim to train no more than about 15 people at any one time. If you are going to work with a large group, plan to include work in 'syndicates' or small sub-groups as part of the event.

- **What are the trainees' needs?** You must make sure that you are providing what people want – not what you think they need.

Talk to your trainees prior to the training, and ask them what they want to achieve from it. You might send a questionnaire around the group and ask people to fill in their most important objectives. If necessary, ask the trainees to discuss these matters with their colleagues or managers.

Design the workshop to meet these needs. Always be guided by what the trainees have told you as objectives, rather than your own.

Include as part of the plan of the workshop an opening session in which trainees can identify their learning objectives and you can summarise them on a flipchart.

- **How long will the workshop last?** A training session might last anything from half a day to two – or even three – days. You will know how long you have got and for how long your trainees will be able to be released. The great danger is that you try to fit too much into a short time. Learning writing skills involves close work and lots of concentration. Build in plenty of breaks.
- **Where will you train?** Try to work in a room or space that is reasonably quiet and free from disruptions. A training session on writing skills needs a calm, reflective atmosphere.
- **What training style will you adopt?** The more practical and 'hands-on' the better. Try to build into your plan a variety of training methods:
 - didactic lecturing (take care not to do lots of this);
 - 'Socratic' training, where you ask lots of questions and encourage the group to hold a conversation amongst themselves;
 - practical examples, worked individually, in pairs, in small groups or with the whole group.

Prepare to include lots of examples – from Writing for change, from the trainees themselves and perhaps from elsewhere in your

organisation. Worked exercises are the most powerful way to demonstrate the ideas you are trying to put across. Remember that they usually take longer than expected.

Above all, vary the style of the training at least every hour, and sometimes more frequently. Your trainees may expect this to be an extended English lesson. You must work hard to make sure that it is as much unlike school as possible.

- **What materials will you need?** Most training workshops require a set of core materials including:

- a blackboard, whiteboard or flipchart (with at least two pads and lots of felt-tip pens);
- writing paper and pens or pencils;
- pins, sticky tape or temporary adhesives to fix flipchart sheets to the wall.

If possible, you might also use:

- an overhead projector;
- a projector that displays information from a computer.

Theoretically, you should need little more to conduct an effective workshop in writing skills – beyond, of course, your trainees. In reality, you should also think about providing:

- support materials: handouts, or a workbook;
- examples of trainees' work, gathered together prior to the workshop if possible;
- a display stand where participants can display materials from their own organisation or department;
- a range of practical exercises for you to pick and choose from as the workshop progresses. You can't have too many of these.

Writing for change includes pages, diagrams, charts and examples that can form support materials for your workshop. You can use them in a variety of ways.

- Create overhead slides from selected pages and use them to illustrate key learning points.
- Project Writing for change through a projector connected up to a pc or laptop and choose the pages that will best help you.
- Print out examples and other pages from Writing for change and use them as handouts to support the workshop.

- Create a workbook that your trainees can use during the workshop and take away with them, using pages from Writing for change.

The end result of all your planning will be a timetable for your workshop – or series of workshops. You should circulate this timetable to all your trainees before they arrive, so that they can see an outline of what they can expect from the day.

Specimen training timetable

Report writing

A two-day programme

This programme gives participants the skills to write persuasive and coherent reports. It is designed to allow analysts to transform complex technical information into convincing arguments.

Objectives

As a result of attending this course, participants will be able to:

- understand the functional nature of reports;
- prepare and construct persuasive reports;
- organise information more efficiently and convincingly;
- improve their use of language.

The programme concentrates on addressing individual needs. Throughout the programme, participants will work on their own reports. Specifically, they will:

- produce the outline of a 'live' report;
- receive detailed feedback on any material they submit to the course leader.

Participants will be required, prior to the course, to send an example of their work to the course leader for initial evaluation.

Outline programme (two days)

Communicating on paper

- General principles
- Managing information

Reports as management tools

- Functions of reports
- Writing for different types of reader
- Time management

Creating a message

- What do you want to achieve?
- Who is your audience?
- Clarifying and checking the report's message
- Organising your ideas

Practical exercises in planning a report

Constructing an outline

- Control criteria

Practical exercise: preparing an outline

Writing a first draft

- Essential apparatus of a report
- Functions of prose; techniques of explanation
- Summaries and introductions
- Elements of layout
- Practical work: developing the outline; identifying necessary prose techniques

Editing the report

- Constructing effective paragraphs
- Improving your sentences
- Choosing the best words
- Plain English

Practical exercises: editing for clarity

Action session

Participants commit themselves to actions they will take as a result of attending the course.

Running the workshop

The most important sign that a workshop has succeeded is that your trainees go away with an 'action list': a list of practical actions that they feel they can take as a result of learning. Everything you do in the workshop must aim for this one outcome.

Establishing objectives

The first step towards this outcome is to establish and acknowledge the trainees' own reasons for being there. Ask them to contribute their objectives for the workshop – in small groups rather than individually – and record them on your flipchart. It is vitally important that you ask your trainees what they want to achieve from the workshop – and that you acknowledge their answers.

Arrange objectives if you can into rough groups, perhaps dealing with:

- planning;
- writing a first draft;
- editing;
- specific documents.

Explain that the workshop is constructed to address these objectives in the approximate order that you have displayed. Feel free to add some of your own, either asking permission from your trainees or explaining that these are your objectives for the session. Your primary objective, of course, is to meet their objectives.

Ask your trainees to write down their own personal objectives after you have held this opening conversation. Explain that, as the workshop progresses, they will have ideas for actions they can take to address their objectives. These ideas are 'action points'. They should record them in an 'action list'. You might provide both 'objective sheets' and 'action list sheets' as handouts or as part of your workbook.

Using practical examples

Your training will be far more persuasive if you use practical examples and worked exercises to demonstrate the points you want to make. Every example is another opportunity to show the relevance of your ideas to the trainees' objectives. Keep theory to an absolute minimum and concentrate as much as possible on practice.

The examples you choose may be:

- pieces planned or written during the workshop itself;
- real documents or parts of documents produced by your organisation;
- papers that the trainees have written themselves or are currently working on;
- self-contained exercises that you have prepared prior to the workshop.

You will probably use a mix of all three types of example.

Be sensitive to people's feelings in submitting their work to a forum of this kind. Writing is an intensely personal activity. The greatest barrier you will probably have to overcome is reluctance on your trainees' part to offer their own work for scrutiny. You must manage this with care. For example, you might begin by offering a paper of your own for them to critique. Alternatively, you might ask them to work on an article or paper by someone unknown to them. The advantages of using material submitted by the trainees themselves far outweigh the difficulties of managing people's feelings – but you must be ready to acknowledge the sensitivity of the issue.

Don't try to have all the answers

Writing is a complex skill. Nobody has all the answers. And, in many cases, there cannot be a single correct answer. Ask questions; ask other trainees' opinions; try to help questioners to find an answer themselves; keep lecturing to a minimum.

As a general rule, try to establish an atmosphere of mutual learning. Your role is to bring the tools and techniques of effective writing to the trainees. Their role is to bring their own expertise and experience to bear in applying those tools and techniques.

Vary your training style

You should have planned for different kinds of training delivery at different times: lecturing, work in small groups, group discussions, exercises, worked examples, individual work. At times, you may need to improvise a little. Be ready to change your style if the workshop becomes slow or under-energised. Above all, always have some practical work ready to hand. This will change the tone of the training, give the trainees something new to do – and offer you a chance to catch your breath and work out what to do next.

Hold an action session

Make sure that the workshop ends by emphasising action points: the things your trainees will do as a result of learning. The best way to do this is to spend half an hour at the end of the workshop on an action session.

- Summarise all the key learning points you have covered.
- Ask trainees to 'swap' action points in small groups.
- Take a few action points from each group and develop any that are particularly important.
- Remind your group how successful you have been in addressing the objectives you wrote up at the start of the workshop.
- Encourage your trainees to use their action plans after the event to monitor their own progress.

After the workshop

You should have a plan for monitoring your trainees' progress after the workshop ends. This might take the form of:

- another shorter meeting some weeks later;
- monitoring performance with the trainees individually;
- being available to help at the end of a telephone or by e-mail.

Follow-up of this kind is sometimes organised in conjunction with the trainees' managers. This is an important part of the training and is often sadly neglected.

In the **Resource Centre** of Writing for change, you will also find notes that we have prepared for training of trainers.



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ABOUT *fahamu*

fahamu is dedicated to strengthening the capacity of not-for-profit organisations around the world. We were established in 1997 and pursue our objectives by:

- producing electronic learning materials;
- designing and managing websites and electronic mailing lists;
- running training courses;
- undertaking research.

We have designed Writing for change as a learning resource that you can use individually, in groups or as the basis for training. We can also run training workshops that will introduce members of your organisation to the organising ideas of Writing for change and provide the foundation for using it, either as a CDROM or as an intranet-based resource.

Details of other learning materials produced by *fahamu* are available from our website (<http://www.fahamu.org/>).

If you have comments on Writing for change, we would be pleased to hear from you.

To order on-line, visit our website <http://www.fahamu.org/>

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To run the program on the CDROM, Macintosh users need System 7.5 or above.
Windows users need Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows NT.



Writing for change

Effective
writing:
core skills

INTRODUCTION

CREATING
A MESSAGE

ORGANISING
YOUR IDEAS

WRITING A
FIRST DRAFT

EFFECTIVE
EDITING

DEFINING
THE CONCEPT

Writing
for
science

PREPARING
AN OUTLINE

WRITING
THE FIRST
DRAFT

TOPPING
AND TAILING

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